

## **Edwards Urges Dewhurst, Straus to Hold Immediate Hearings**

### **on Future of Big 12 & Impact on Texas**

#### ***Congressman Says Texas Citizens Deserve to Have Voices Heard***

(Waco, Texas) – [U.S. Representative Chet Edwards](#) today urged Texas Lt. Governor David Dewhurst and Texas Speaker of the House Joe Straus to call immediate hearings in the Texas Legislature on the impact to the state of Texas if the Big 12 Conference is disbanded.

Edwards commented, “It is important that all the citizens of Texas have a right to have their voices heard on the future of the Big 12 before, not after, all the decisions have been made. These decisions are too important to be decided solely by a small handful of people behind closed doors without public input from the citizens of our great state. The Texas Legislature has a responsibility to our taxpayers to review the impact of any conference realignment on our state’s economy and historic relationships between our state’s universities and their respective communities.”

In 1989, as a State Senator representing Baylor University, Edwards announced that the Texas Senate State Affairs Committee would hold hearings on the then imminent breakup of the Southwest Conference, which would have most likely left Baylor outside of any major conference. Several key legislators then reminded the state’s public university boards that they

had a responsibility to all the taxpayers of Texas, who supported their institutions with millions of tax dollars annually.

Within one week of Edwards' announcement the Chancellors of the University of Texas and Texas A&M contacted Edwards and said they had decided to stay in the Southwest Conference until a more comprehensive plan could be developed for the future of Texas' universities. The end result 5 years later, with the leadership of Governor Ann Richards and Lt. Governor Bob Bullock, was that the University of Texas, Texas A&M, Texas Tech and Baylor stayed together and joined the Big 12 Conference.

Edwards observed, "I have seen first-hand the impact of the Texas Legislature on the issue of our universities' conferences, because in 1989 several University Board members had already stated that Texas and Texas A&M were going to leave the Southwest Conference, but that quickly changed when the Legislature announced it would hold public hearings on the matter. We had a responsibility to act, we did so and it made a positive difference for the University of Texas, Texas A&M, Baylor and Texas Tech by allowing them time to stay together and build the Big 12 as we know it today.

"It is not the fault of the University of Texas, Texas A&M, Baylor or Texas Tech that Nebraska is apparently leaving the Big 12. That departure will have a significant, negative impact on the Big 12, and the respective schools' boards have a right to seriously consider their options. However, my belief is that this is such an important issue to the entire state of Texas that long-term decisions about the future of our state's universities and their respective cities should be made in public, with input from citizens and legislators alike.

“It is my hope that the historic ties and traditions of UT, A&M, Baylor and Texas Tech can be continued, and I would urge Board Members at UT and A&M to consider doing so.

“Whatever decisions are made should be made in public with public input, and the Texas Legislature is the best forum for a full airing of this important issue. This issue is bigger than conferences or television contracts -- this is about Texas protecting its future. I would salute Lt. Gov. Dewhurst and Speaker Straus for exercising leadership on this important issue and allowing the people of Texas to have their voices heard.”

*Edwards is a 1974 graduate of Texas A&M University who represents both Baylor and Texas A&M in the 17<sup>th</sup> congressional district.*